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The journey of ELT teachers from apprenticeship to mastery

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Abstract

In this study, the effects of professional development on teaching of English will be analyzed. In this context, the process of pre-service and in-service training programs is regarded as vital components of teachers' professional developments. Since the degree of professional development programs' contribution to professional preparation is a tough question to answer and offering a tailor made solution fulfilling the needs of all teachers teaching at all levels is not reasonable, the proposed programs are expected to fit both the specific needs of the institutions and individual teachers. Based on this premise, this paper incorporates a model of professional development for TurAFA language teachers.

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1. Introduction

According to the comprehensive report, conducted with 'top' 20 educational institutions around the world, of McKinsey released in November 2010, the most influential factor affecting an educational institution's 'success' is the TEACHER (Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber, 2010). Therefore, it is of vital importance to 'invest' in teachers who are the interface between the aims and goals of a program and the end users; that is the students. In this paper, English Language teachers' developmental stages will be discussed and a professional development model for those teachers will be proposed. Before going further into the details of the model it would be wise to have a closer look at teaching as a profession and define the major terms thoroughly.

2. Teaching as a Profession

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Despite inconclusive discussions on what it really is (Bailey, 2006, pp. 213-222), for English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language (ESOL/EFL) context, an effective teacher can broadly be interpreted as the one who directs the clients towards the objectives, in other words the one who produces a group of high-achiever learners (Arikan, Taşer and Saraç-Süzer; 2008). For the Turkish EFL context, Arikan, Taşer, and Saraç-Süzer (2008) put forward that Turkish students find the following qualities as indicators of being an effective teacher in Turkey:

- “having personal strategies to teach,
- maintaining positive teacher-student interaction,
- creating a positive classroom atmosphere,
- being a model,
- being knowledgeable on target cultures,
- possessing positive personal characteristics such as being friendly to students,
- having correct pronunciation of the English sounds,
- teaching with effective classroom materials and by using technology,
- giving positive reinforcement” (p. 43).

Teachers are supposed to have the above features and qualities in order to be effective in classrooms. Teaching is actually a profession incorporating a number of distinct roles. Most of the time, more than one of these roles need to prevail altogether. Spratt, Pulverness and Williams (2005, p. 145) list eight different teacher roles in the classroom: planner, informer, manager, monitor, involver, parent/friend, diagnostician, and resource.

In his ground-shaking book, Kumaravadivelu (2003, pp. 5-17; 2008) reveals the roles of teachers as ‘passive technicians, reflective practitioners, and transformative intellectuals’. Since the teachers as human beings are expected to play various roles both in and outside the classroom, and the educational settings seek for teachers with flawless teaching performance, training and education programs for those staff are viewed as the sine qua non of effective teaching practice. At this point, as various dimensions of the professional efforts to ensure robust learning environments, the terms teacher education, teacher training, and teacher development as need to be clarified.

3. Defining the Terms: Training vs. Development

Second/Foreign language teacher education was primarily perceived as formal part of the ESOL/EFL teachers' education when the concept was coined (Hubbard et al., 1983; McArthur, 1983; Allwright, 1988). Later on, the term 'teacher education' has turned out to be used to refer to what English language teachers do next in their careers as part of their in-service education (Ur, 1991; Nunan, 1999; Harmer, 2007a; Harmer, 2007b). The term has gained variations to refer to different domains like 'teacher education, teacher development (TD), teacher training (TT) and professional development' (Richards and Nunan, 1990; Head and Taylor, 1997; Richards, 1998; Epstein, 2001; Arian, 2006; Johnson, 2009).

In the literature, there is a distinction between teacher education and teacher training: the former is stated to be concerned with theoretical issues whereas the latter is concerned with the practical ones. TD, on the other hand, is concerned with the learning and teaching atmosphere (Head and Taylor, 1997, p. 9). Professional development and teacher development are used interchangeably (Thornbory, 2006, pp. 224-225). However different they may seem in theory, they are also claimed to complement each other in fulfilling the needs of the teachers (Bailey, 2006). In order to see the whole picture, Head and Taylor give a table showing the differences between teacher training and teacher development as follows:

Table 1. Differences between TD and TT Head and Taylor, 1997, p. 9)

Teacher Training (TT)	Teacher Development (TD)
Compulsory	Voluntary
Competency based	Holistic
Short term	Long term
One-off	Ongoing
Temporary	Continual
External agenda	Internal agenda
Skill/technique and knowledge based	Awareness based, angled towards personal growth and development of attitudes/insights
Compulsory for entry to the profession	Non-compulsory
Top-down	Bottom-up
Product/certificate weighted	Process weighted
Means you can get a job	Means you can stay interested in your job
Done with experts	Done with peers

Johnston, Pawan and Mahan-Taylor (2005) state that teacher life stories, professional development, teacher beliefs and knowledge, and teacher identity are the four key factors grounding the theoretical framework of professional development for a teacher. In this respect, teacher development as a bottom-up process is more humanistic and appears to create productive learning environments shaped by the

individual needs of the teachers as learners. In his study, Arikan (2004) interviewed nine English Language Instructors in Turkey revealing how they perceive institutional and individual professional development through narratives. He identified that realizing primarily your present condition is the first step in order for the further perspectives of TD like TESOL or ITEFL. He also sheds light on the importance of teacher voice in the agenda to create better TD programs. Similarly, Dogancay-Aktuna (2005) mentions the importance of incorporating learner preference into the teacher training courses making an analogy that teachers like the language learners come to the classroom with certain methods and techniques in their mind. She argues that those expectations should at least be sensitively handled if not met. Inozu (2011) also points out the importance of beliefs of student teachers and working teachers in shaping the practical issues of the field and therefore suggesting developmental changes within TD programs on the part of teacher before and during the service in the Turkish context.

Teacher development is also discussed within the context of teacher educators or teacher trainers (for example Ellis, 1997; 2010); however, it will not be elaborated much herein in terms of the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, when we look at the three roles of teacher educators/teacher trainers, Ellis (2010) argues that Teacher Educators/Teacher Trainers have three basic roles as transmitters of information, mentors and awareness raisers. Bearing those in mind, the term Professional Development (PD) will be used to refer to both teacher training and teacher education practices within the field throughout this paper.

4. Pre-service and In-service Training Programs

English language teachers' training/education can be divided into two: pre-service and in-service. Broadly speaking, training/education before the actual practice of teaching like undergraduate level courses or certificate or diploma programs preparing candidates aiming at becoming EFL/ESL teachers can be referred as pre-service while what is done after commencing the practical teaching career can be referred as in-service, clear from the name: in the service or while serving. These activities may include MA, certificate programs, diploma programs, some other teaching qualifications, seminars, webinars, so on and so forth. Whatever is done in order to develop you as a teacher can be counted here within the scope of in-service both intrinsically or extrinsically driven.

Bailey (2006) puts forward the importance of supervising for in-service language teachers (pp. 267-292) and for non-native-speaking teachers (pp. 293-313). She also proposes that 'mentoring is an approach to teacher development that removes evaluative supervision from the teacher-mentor relationship' (p. 335). Therefore supervision can be referred as part of teacher development from the perspective of in-service period of teaching practice covering native and non-native teachers of language.

Osuji (2009) provides a framework of lifelong teacher education model of Nigeria which can serve as a sample. Similarly, Newman, Samimy, and Romstedt (2010) identify key points of developing a training program for secondary teachers of English language in Ohio: prioritizing content and ESL teacher collaboration and conducting needs assessment. Similar ideas on needs analysis of 'clients' (teachers under education in this case) was proposed by Epstein years ago as well (2001). A similar study was conducted by Busch (2010). She also emphasizes the importance of teacher beliefs and restructuring them for the better TD programs. Uygun, Ergen and Öztürk carried out a study and put forward the similarities and differences among three countries Turkey, Germany, and France in terms of TD programs (of the state institutions especially). They concluded that education system plays a critical role in shaping the TD programs. It was also observed that practical part is important in TD programs of the three countries. Spratt (1994) provides a lot of practical ideas in order to contribute to the TD activities in her book titled

“English for the Teacher”. Similarly, Thornbury and Watkins (2007a; 2007b) have really practical ideas on improving awareness of teachers in their CELTA books.

5. Effects of professional development on teaching of English

Needless to say that, all the effort on learners, teachers, and the environment is for the sake of their ‘influence’ on teaching a foreign language, English in this case. Casteel and Ballantyne (2010) give professional development as one of the key elements in their report (p. 5) affecting learner and institution outcome. Aebersold and Field (1997) stated that there is a great difference between the traditional teacher and the one who is always trying to improve herself/himself. The latter is obviously more influential on the part of the learner and learning environment. This difference is also indicated by the research (Akbari and Tajik, 2009). On the same spot, Turhan and Arikan (2009) found out in their study that both novice and experienced teachers found INSET (in-service training) and TD important for their actual and future teaching practices although they benefit differently.

From the scope of TD, awareness of teacher also plays a critical role (Arndt, Harvey and Nuttall, 2000; van Lier, 2001, pp. 10-15) in many aspects. And SL/FL teacher development is often associated with awareness; similarly, teacher language awareness is also related to quality and structuring language input for the learners. Andrews (2007) suggests that teacher language awareness which will result in making informed choices is pretty influential in terms of input for the clients, i.e., the learners. In other words, in order to improve the probability of ‘quality’ input, encouraging professional development is indispensable since it will help increase teacher language awareness. Although theoretically convincing, this area of the field lacks empirical evidence: people tend to think that TD is good; however, there are not many studies seeking to find the difference between the effect of ‘developing teacher’ and ‘traditional’ one on learners and learning outcomes.

6. Models of teacher education

When it comes to Teacher Education models, which are actualization of the theory in a way, there are a number of various ideas. For instance, Wallace (1991) puts forward three models of TD (pp. 6-17): In the first model, he suggests that professional expertise largely depends on another professional practitioner just like the apprentice and expert relation in the practice of the ‘craft’. In this model, the expert is the source of information and inspiration for the novice and young trainee. The novice trainee closely follows the expert and tries to imitate his skillful techniques. Accordingly, information and knowledge are passed on from one generation to another in a traditional manner. Wallace (1991) also asserts that this was how teaching practice was conducted in terms of professional development up until the end of WWII in 1945. The second model suggests that ‘the findings of scientific knowledge and experimentation are conveyed to the trainee by those who are experts in the relevant areas’ (*ibid*, p. 9). Therefore, trainee teachers may receive information on what has been newly discovered in the field of linguistics. It is their responsibility to put this into practice. Third and last model proposes that disciplined professional education is composed of two kinds of knowledge development: received knowledge and experimental knowledge. In brief, the former is the knowledge of necessary intellectual content of the profession and the latter is knowledge developed out of practice. Therefore, Wallace (1991) proposes an alternative model for teacher education ‘called reflective’. This model proposes two stages: pre-training and in-service training. The ultimate aim is to reach the goal: professional competence which can be defined in two senses (pp. 48-59): On the one hand professional competence may refer to receiving a certificate and that is all. There is no need to go over the knowledge again. This is also called initial competence. On the other hand, professional competence may refer to a life-long process of self-education or self-training (*ibid*, p. 58). This model asserts that trainee teachers or

novice teachers should base their practice on received knowledge and experimental knowledge. They also have their existing ‘conceptual schemata’ in advance. Based on their prior knowledge and current practices, they should reflect on their practices through a number of ways like action research, keeping teacher journals, and peer observations (*ibid*, pp. 52-57). These models serve for the purpose for the general frame; however, as was mentioned earlier it is really difficult to state that these models are tailor made, that is, applicable to all of the contexts. Rather these can only serve as the global frames for the local solutions. Within the post-method era, as mentioned in Kumaravadivelu (2003; 2008), creating your own environment is a must since there is not a perfect-match model for the teachers in your context. Within this respect, a unique Teacher Development Model for TurAFA has been theoretically designed including more details compared to the above-mentioned ones.

7. A model for TurAFA

Turkish Air Force (TurAF) is a unique organization carrying out ongoing educational activities that enable the Air Force to become a learning organization, as well as educating self-learning officers who bear not only the necessary general knowledge, military customs, vocational knowledge, and skills but also critical thinking skills. In this part of the paper, a model of professional development for Turkish Air Force Academy (TurAFA) language teachers will be proposed. This model is also expected to apply the other higher education institutions as well. Since TurAFA teachers are all assigned to the institution at career entry levels, in this context it is impossible to carry out pre-service language teacher education programs. So the focal point of the proposed model will be in-service training. Teacher development model for TurAFA teachers is a continuing education designed in accordance with the needs of both the individual teachers and institution. It is a constructivist model entailing collaboration with the content teachers and subject-matter experts. In order to fully implement continuing teacher education model and to give necessary education to the personnel, various continuing education programs should be prepared for the Air Force teaching staff in accordance with their stages of expertise and the functions to be performed. Steffy (2001) has identified six distinct professional life cycles of teachers in a developmental continuum. These life cycles are novice teacher, apprentice teacher, professional teacher, expert teacher, distinguished teacher, emeritus teacher (active retired teacher). As teachers progress throughout their careers, it is an administrative responsibility to promote their professional learning via offering education opportunities that best fits their current expertise stages. It is essential that those educational opportunities be apt to the needs of the institution and specialist instructors, i.e. testing, materials development, and curriculum specialists should also benefit from these educational opportunities. Teachers’ professional maturity levels to be attained for each professional life cycle are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers’ Professional Maturity Levels

<i>Stages</i>	Professional Maturity Level to be Attained
Novice	Teaching skills and content knowledge
Apprentice	Developing teaching skills and putting those skills into practice
Professional	Demonstrating skills and facing challenges
Expert	Seeking for career opportunities and exemplifying good practice
Distinguished	Leading and supervising
Emeritus	Advising and acting as mentor

In TurAFA continuing teacher development model, from novice to distinguished stage various courses will be planned as the years pass in the service. Basic assumption of the model is experience does not automatically lead to expertise and as teachers progress throughout their careers, they need education to exceed their present competence levels. Basic components of the model are presented in Figure 1. The proposed model sets specific courses pertaining to the professional developmental stages of the teachers.



Fig. 1. TurAFA Continuing Teacher Development Model

Since teaching a foreign language is also teaching a new culture and developing intercultural competence is a fundamental goal to be attained in language classes, raising cultural awareness of the teachers should be ensured through the courses carried out abroad (Kumaradivelu, 2003; 2008). The proposed courses and seminars designed in accordance with the developmental stages of the teachers are given in Table 3. It is highly recommended that those education programs are delivered in target culture.

Table 3. Courses and Seminars

Course/Seminar	Expertise Stage
Methodology Seminar	Novice
Basic Language Skills	Apprentice
Testing English Language Proficiency	Professional and Expert
Material Development Seminar	Professional and Expert
Curriculum Design and Evaluation	Professional and Expert
English Language Training Managing Skills	Distinguished

8. Particular Characteristics of the Model

TurAFA continuing teacher development model has some critical characteristics. Those particular characteristics of the method need to be discussed to dispel misconceptions in putting the theory into practice. These characteristics are as follows.

8.1. Constructivist design

Constructivist classrooms entail constructivist teachers. So we need constructivist teacher education. Teacher learning does not happen automatically when student teachers are provided with a rich input of knowledge of the field. Establishing the link between the new and existing knowledge of trainees and achieving student teachers' understanding of teaching practice through conceptual development are the two core aspects of the model.

8.2. Needs analysis

The concerns of TurAF language teachers are related to preparing students for the task specific communicative demands of an increasingly complicated operational environment. For this reason, TurAFA continuing teacher development model should be grounded on a precise needs analysis leading to taxonomy of the attributes and expertise required in TurAF learning environments. So, guiding principles of the model should be based on a systematic analysis of data gathered from questionnaires applied to experienced language teachers.

8.3. Teaming classroom and content teachers

TurAFA language teachers as practitioners of a content based English language teaching program need an interdisciplinary collaboration teacher development model. Taking this fact into consideration, TurAFA continuing teacher development model offers opportunities for teaming content teachers with EFL practitioners. Though building this cooperation between EFL and content teachers is actually a complex issue, content teachers of the various academic subjects should be paired with EFL teachers to develop effective teaching strategies.

8.4. Trainers are important

The effectiveness of teacher training programs is directly proportional to the degree of the competence of the trainers who are delivering them. So, trainer quality enhancement programs are as crucial as the experience and expertise of the trainers. In this respect, TurAFA continuing teacher development model gives importance to the teacher education programs delivered by highly qualified trainers. In order to establish tailor made teacher development programs for TurAFA, employing distinguished and emeritus instructors as teacher trainers would be a wise solution to this problem.

8.5. Top-down vs bottom-up teacher training strategies

Developments in cognitive psychology and sociocultural theories of learning led to the rise of social constructivism in educational settings. This paradigm change played a major role in the shift from top-down models of education to bottom-up models. Teacher education programs are generally initiated by central authorities and institutional level decision makers rarely take part in program development process. For the sake of creating productive learning environments, TurAFA continuing teacher development model favor bottom-up teacher training strategies with individual and institutional needs.

8.6. Evaluation as a fundamental element

As a fundamental rule of program development, advantages and disadvantages of implementing a program should be discussed and research data is needed to provide guidance to the effectiveness of various training strategies employed in the program. TurAFA continuing teacher development model as a program proposed to increase teacher effectiveness also sticks to this rule to ensure quality in teaching practices carried out in language classrooms. Evaluation is a fundamental element of TurAFA model and obtaining systematic information and acquiring objective research data through qualitative and quantitative research instruments is regarded as essential for running a healthy teacher education program.

9. Conclusion and Further Recommendations

As was mentioned earlier, since the degree of professional development programs' contribution to professional preparation is a tough question to answer and offering a tailor made solution fulfilling the needs of all teachers teaching at all levels is not reasonable, the proposed programs are expected to fit both the specific needs of the institutions and individual teachers. Based on this premise, the above proposed paper incorporates a model of professional development for Turkish Air Force Academy language teachers and is also expected to apply the other higher education institutions as well. Bearing in mind the importance of investigating the teacher beliefs (Richards and Lockhart, 1996, pp. 29-51), developing a model based on the preferences of the teachers is the issue for the further study.

1. Teacher education is ultimately a pedagogical concern and it will become an effective process provided that a sufficient number of decision makers are convinced of its importance.

2. Teacher education is an integral component of the quality cycle in language teaching and the emphasis should be given to quality assurance and quality enhancement through employing bottom-up strategies.

3. Both content and EFL teachers need to learn how to cooperate for best practices in learning environments.

4. Professional development should be an essential promotion criterion motivating the teachers to take part in continuous professional development programs willingly.

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